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## Seasonal Influenza: Flu Basics

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Influenza (the flu) is a contagious respiratory illness caused by influenza viruses. It can cause mild to severe illness, and at times can lead to death. Some people, such as older people, young children, and people with certain health conditions, are at high risk for serious flu complications. The best way to prevent the flu is by getting **vaccinated** each year.

The 2011-2012 flu vaccine will protect against the three influenza viruses that research indicates will be most common during the season. This includes an influenza A (H1N1) virus, an influenza A (H3N2) virus, and an influenza B virus.

People who have the flu often feel some or all of these signs and symptoms:

- Fever\* or feeling feverish/chills
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Runny or stuffy nose
- Muscle or body aches
- Headaches
- Fatigue (very tired)
- Some people may have vomiting and diarrhea, though this is more common in children than adults

Preventing the Flu: Good Health Habits Can Help Stop Germs The **single best way to prevent seasonal flu is to get vaccinated** each year, but good health habits like covering your cough and washing your hands often can help stop the spread of germs and prevent respiratory illnesses like the flu. There also are flu antiviral drugs that can be used to treat and prevent the flu.

**1. Avoid close contact.** Avoid close contact with people who are sick. When you are sick, keep your distance from others to protect them from getting sick too.

**2. Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness.

**3. Cover your mouth and nose.** Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing. It may prevent those around you from getting sick.

**4. Clean your hands.** Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs.

**5. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.** Germs are often spread when a person touches something that is contaminated with germs and then touches his or her eyes, nose, or mouth.

**6. Practice other good health habits.** Get plenty of sleep, be physically active, manage your stress, drink plenty of fluids, and eat nutritious food.

<http://www.cdc.gov/flu/protect/habits.htm>

